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ABSTRACT

A study examined the amount of minority student participation in college debate teams and the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) tournaments and minority success rates. Ten forensic tournaments from around the United States were selected and observed, and minorities were identified from tournament populations. Final result sheets and awards announcements were used to determine success rates of those minorities observed. Results showed that minorities made up 11.1% of the tournament population, with blacks comprising 6.5% of the minorities. As minorities make up 17% of higher education enrollment, there is a significant disparity in participation. However, success rates for minority participants were fairly good, with 13.9% receiving speakers' awards. There is still a noticeable lack of minorities participating in debate activities, though, and surveys of black students have suggested that such on-campus activities cater to white students, and that black students are rarely informed of such activities. To correct this problem, debate coaches must actively recruit minority participants, and make the activity accessible to minorities. Once minorities begin to appear on teams, others may be encouraged to join, and the minority voice can then be trained, supported, and heard. (Two tables of data and three pages of references are included.) (JC)

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# Minority Students in CEDA Debate: Involvement, Success, and Barriers

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Minority Students in CEDA Debate:
Involvement, Success, and Barriers

The first resolution passed at the Sedalia Conference in 1974 called for every effort being "made to encourage the participation of minorities in forensics activities" (McBath, 1975, p.12). Ten years later a similar resolution was endorsed by the participants at the Second National Conference on Forensics:

> The American Forensic Association should establish a committee given the specific charge to increase and strengthen forensic participation by identifying ethnic, racial, gender, and handicap barriers which may currently inhibit student participation and should disseminate findings concerning such barriers throughout the forensic community (Parson,1984, p. 43).

In establishing this resolve, it was noted that "while the 1974 Sedalia Conference recommended research to explore both minority and gender-based concerns, as yet no specific forum has been established within the forensic community to encourage such research and disseminate its findings" (Parson, 1984, p.43-44).

While no specific forum was established for such study, there was an ambitious undertaking initiated by Bruce Manchester and Sheryl Friedley to investigate male-female differences in participation and success rates in the various forensic activities. This effort resulted in numerous regional and national convention papers [Manchester and Friedley, 1984; Medcalf, 1984; Friedley and Manchester, 1985; Logue,1985(a); Logue, 1985 (b); Harris and Boone, 1985; Friedley and Manchester, 1986; Medcalf, 1986; Porter, 1986]. But, to date, the task of exploring forensic participation by various ethnic and racial groups as well as those individuals with handicaps has not been attempted. This paper then is an exploration of minority student participation and successes at specific

tournaments sanctioned by the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA).

CEDA is the largest intercollegiate debate organization in the United States. At the end of the 1986-1987 debate season, 326 schools had competed in CEDA, and total school membership was at 344 programs. While several other debate organizations exist (e.g. American Debate Association, Parliamentary Debate Association, and policy debate associated with the American Forensic Association), none of their membership numbers compare to CEDA's.

## Review of Literature

Generally speaking, intercollegiate debate has been perceived as a male activity. More specifically, this extracurricular activity has been predominantly, if not exclusively, a white male "intellectual sport." Recent demographic information has substantiated that males dominate the debate world. Males madeup some 85 percent of all policy debaters (AFA) and 74 percent of national level debaters in CEDA (Logue, 1986). Logue (1986) found significantly more women debating in regional CEDA than at national-level tournaments. Males still comprised 67 percent of regional activity. Past research has not identified ethnic or racial differences within the populations, but participant observation alone would readily discern the white majority in debate.

Minority participation in extracurricular activities generally has not been substantially examined. Teddlie and Larche (1979) examined Black student attitudes about Louisiana State University and their participation in extracurricular activities. They reported that Blacks had a lower participation rate in extracurri-

cular activities as compared to White students. Over 80 percent of the Black students felt that the on-campus activities catered to Whites. And while Blacks indicated interest in campus activities, they explained that they did not participate because they were not informed of those activities. Blacks indicated they would become more involved in campus activities if (1) more Blacks participated and (2) there was more of an equal Black/White ratio. Whites, on the hand, were found to prefer predominantly White groups.

Another study which was conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Rooney, 1985), found a relatively small number of minorities (17 percent) reporting involvement in minority student organizations. The four minority groups surveyed (Afro-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American) indicated more involvement (98 percent) in campus-wide student organizations, such as vocational and professional groups, greek organizations, volunteer groups, recreational or social groups, residence and union governance. Rooney (1985) acknowledged that the 98 percent figure was "impressive," but she warned that "given the nubmer of groups and the number of minority students, however, there is still underrepresentation, which is a phenomenon not inconsistent with minority student academic life" (p. 454).

A survey of 267 white undergraduates (Damico and Scott, 1984) found that frequent cross-race contact while in high school appears to be a predictor of frequent cross-race contact in a university setting. The canonical correlation revealed that within the university setting multiple types of contact appear: (1) Students who went to informal parties and dinners with members of other races also attended athletic events together, talked about

personal and confidential matters, visited in their homes, and participated together in school clubs, teams, or other activities. (2) Students who had contact in a religious context also had involvement in musical activities (band or choral groups). (3) Athletic team members of various races also attend athletic events together and participate together in other university sponsored teams, clubs, or activities. (4) Musical contact also correlated to high contact through religious services, work on a school publication, and student government.

In a more general sense, literature discussing the college experiences of Blacks and other minorities is limited. Allen (1982) reported these notable works: Morris' Elusive Equality (1979), Thomas' Black Students in Higher Education: Conditions and Experiences in the 1970's (1981), Blackwell's Mainstreaming Outsiders (1981), and Astins' Minorities in Higher Education (1982).

Allen (1982 and 1984) surveyed hundreds of Black undergraduates at predominantly white campuses nationally. He studied only state-supported universities since the majority of Blacks in higher education attend public institutions. He reported (1982) that

> Overall, the students' adjustment to the university appears to be awkward and generally unsatisfying. Nearly 62 percent of the students reported little or no integration into general student activities on campus. In addition, 45 percent reported that extracurricular activities on the campus did not adequately reflect their interests (p.3).

Allen (1982) concluded the "the task confronting interested researchers, practioners, and policy makers at this point is to identify factors and formulate strategies helpful in improving the educational experiences and outcomes of Black students in higher

education" (p. 12).

In a later study, Allen (1984) reported the findings of over 900 Black undergraduates from eight predominantly white state univeristies. These results were similar to his earlier research:

> Most of the students, 54 percent, reported feeling only "very little" or "not at all" a part of the general campus life. Just 11 percent expressed a feeling of "considerable" involvement. Evaluations of campus extracurricular activities were more positive. Forty-five percent felt that their interests were at least "somewhat" reflected in campus activities. Seventeen percent said campus activities were a "considerable" reflection of their interests, whereas 38 percent gave the more negative replies of only "very little" or "not at all" reflective of their interests (p. 12).

He found that many Blacks were involved in Black organizations on their campuses: 39 percent reported "often" or "very often," another 30 percent reported "somewhat" involved, and 30 percent said "hardly ever" involved.

Allen (1984) found academic competitiveness for the majority of Blacks (54 percent) to be a positive or very positive experience.

Although Allen focused on Black undergraduates, the results appear to be more generalizable to the minority condition on U.S. campuses than do the more limited samples from Wisconsin and Louisiana State.

The current research examines the actual participation rates and success rates of minorities in intercollegiate (CEDA) debate at selected tournaments.

## Method

Participant observations with confirmatory interviews were made at ten forensic tournaments, with sanctioned CEDA debate divisions. Although these tournaments were not randomly selected, they did represent the regional flavor of the MidAtlantic region (North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland) and that of the Ohio Valley region (Ohio). One tournament was examined in the New York region and one tournament (Towson State's Chesapeake Classic) was classified as a national level tournament since it attracted competitors from across the United States. In sum these tournaments should provide a fairly accurate description of minority participation in an Eastern segment of the country.

An attempt to survey a large Western tournament was unsuccessful due to the poor return rate of descriptive data provided by coaches. This information along with data from the National CEDA Tournament will be sought during the ensuing months.

After minorities were identified from the tournament populations, final result sheets and awards' announcements were used to determine success rates of minorities in terms of elimination rounds and speaker awards. The major problem encountered in identifying minorities was in categorizing debaters who had one parent as a minority. It was decided in the couple of cases where this occurred to include the person as a minority, since the student used this categorization within their own universities. There is also the likelihood of not being able to identify some minorities of mixed parentage, especially if the surname was not distinguishable.

## Results

Of the debaters competing in these ten tournaments, only 11.1 percent were identified as minorities (Table 1). Black participants comprised 6.5 percent of the population and other minorities (Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and a non-native Indian) madeup the other 4.6 percent.

The greatest proportion of Blacks participated at the George Mason University and the University of Richmond tournaments. Other minority groups had greater proportional representation at the College of William and Mary, John Carroll University, and the Towson State H.L. Mencken tournaments.

In varsity divisions alone, minorities were 12.3 percent of the debaters (7.2 percent were Black; 5.1 percent were other). When only novice and junior varsity divisions are considered, only 6.4 percent of the participants are minorities (3.6 percent Black; 2.7 percent other). There are twice as many minorities in upper level debate as compared to entry levels.

Speaker awards, which signify the top debaters at a given tournament, are given to only a small number of debaters. Of the 79 awards given at these ten tournaments, 13.9 percent were won by minorities (Table 2).

Tournaments are allowed to have various elimination brackets, based on the number of participating teams. Only two tournaments had octofinals (Capital and Towson State Chesapeake Classic), and in those rounds, 4.6 percent were minority debaters (as compared to the 7.3 percent minority population of those two tournaments).

At the eight tournaments with quarterfinals, 14.9 percent of the

debaters were minorities (compared to 10.9 percent minority population at these tournaments).

Twelve semifinals (including both novice and varsity divisions) were available for study. In those rounds 13 minorities debated, or 13.5 percent of the semifinalists (as compared to 10.5 percent minority population in those tournaments).

The twelve final rounds found eight minorities competing. With a total of 48 debaters in those finals, 16.7 percent were minorities (as compared to 10.5 percent minority population in those tournaments).

## Discussion

In its annual report, the American Council on Education (1986) noted that whereas minorities represent 21.3 percent of the American population, those minorities comprise only 17 percent of the total enrollment in higher education. Finding only 11.1 percent of the CEDA debate population as minority, there is a significant disparity between minority enrollment and debate participation.

Blacks makeup 9.5 percent of the enrollment in higher education (American Council on Education, 1986); however, only 6.5 percent of the CEDA debaters were Black. Although 3 percent is the smallest disparity of the percentages cited, it still indicates a problem for the CEDA debate community. A more representative national sampling is needed to fully understand the activity's involvement and status of commitment to the Black college student. If the Towson State Chesapeake Classic is considered a national level tournament, then minorities are more poorly represented (8.6 percent) at this type of tour-

nament, than at more local events. Although only three tournaments were examined with novice and junior varsity levels, there seems to be an even more serious area of neglect here. Only 3.6 percent of entry level debaters are Black. The CEDA debate community, with assistance from communication colleagues, needs to be fully aware of its role in providing educational opportunities for minority students as well as whites.

The other minorities account for some 8 percent of the college enrollment (American Council of Education, 1986). The CEDA participation rate for Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and non-native Indians was 4.6 percent. Again, a disparity similar to that of Blacks exists for other minority involvement.

Despite their lack of numbers, minorities in debate do succeed. Proportionally more minorities received speakers' awards (13.9 percent) in comparison to their proportion of the debate population (11.1 percent). This is suggesting that those minorities who are competing are good and being recognized. The makeup off the elimination rounds further supports the successfulness of minorities.

The exception to the success rate, however, is at the two largest tournaments examined (Capital and Towson's Chesapeake Classic). Minorities were not represented sufficiently in the octofinal rounds. There also were no speakers' awards won by minorities at either of these tournaments. It appears that at larger and more nationally competitive contests, minorities are being surpassed by their white counterparts.

In quarters, semifinals, and finals, minorities begin to appear in greater proportions than their general participation rates.

In final rounds examined, minorities significantly exceeded their general population rates. For the most part this data is regionally oriented and suggests that the few minority students in regional CEDA are good debaters who advance into elimination rounds and appear in final rounds at an impressive rate of 16.7 percent.

This good news, however, should not create a sense of complacency. The overall figures still present a picture of insufficient minority participation and even fewer minorities in entry level divisions.

While this research did not seek to empirically examine the barriers to minority involvement in debate, this report would be remise without some attention to those barriers. An earlier study by Mueller (1961) reported that non-participation in extracurricular activities was attributed to part-time work, weekends away from campus, lack of interest, and time-required for academic activities. These may still be sufficient reasons (especially the financial one) preventing minorities from participation. Intercollegiate debate takes time for preparation and travel. This time requirement places demands on both academics and employment. A student not as available to compete, may not receive the necessary support, coaching, and opportunities. An eight-month debate season may also be forboding to an entry-level debater. Fortunately, CEDA's policy of having a different topic each semester allows for easier access into the season in midyear or allows for a student to debate during the semester which is less demanding. A shorter forensics season and a willingness of coaches to travel less involved and thus less competitive students is essential if minorities are going to be provided more opportunities in the activity.

Only 4 percent of U.S. faculty are Black (Higher Education Advocate, 1986), and in CEDA debate there may be only a few Black or minority coaches nationwide. Not only do few minority debater role models exist, but the situation is even more dire in the coaching area. The activity is (as are many other areas) in desparate need of minority coaches and directors.

Finally, the recruitment efforts of most programs are probably not oriented toward minorities. Forensic recruitment, if done at high schools, is geared toward competitive (Top Ten) debaters. High schools are predominantly feeder programs for white males. On-campus recruitment may not be sufficient or appealing to minorities. Without minorities already visible on a team, other minorities may not consider the climate open to them. One of Towson's Black debaters joined the team two years ago because she was encouraged by other Black members. The minority network needs to be established and maintained. The coach's efforts in securing new members must be conscious with regards to encouraging minorities. The easiest course for a coach to take is to let the assertive students come to the program, without any direct plan as to team composition. Minority recruitment should be a decidedly conscious goal for coaches.

Higher education as a whole faces severe problems of minority involvement in the general university life and of declining black enrollment (Baltimore Sun, 1987). The various suggested solutions to these problems seem to encourage more student involvement in their education and faculty awareness and support (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1987). Forensic faculty, as part of the larger University community, need to realize their role in this university-wide crisis.

Forensic coaches need to make a conscious and committed effort to make the activity accessible to minority students. A special recruitment drive should be geared to minorities so that there is a genuine interest shown in minority participation. Potential minorities need to be encouraged directly to become involved. Special support may have to be provided to minorilties in order to make forensics more available to minorities.

A message for forensic faculty may be evident in this challenge to those in higher education:

> ...the challenges facing higher education for the remainder of this century, insofar as minority access is concerned, will be far less tractable, more sensitive, and subtler than those of the past. We are moving from an era when denial of opportunity was the central problem to one in which the difficulty is in assuring that minorities will be able to take advantage of the substantial opportunities that do now exist (Loury, 1987).

The debate opportunity does exist on many college campuses today. That opportunity should not just be for the white male. It is most important, especially in the arena of debate, that all voices are given the opportunity to speak, and that minority voices are trained, protected, supported and heard so that the cherished American value of pluralism can be enhanced. The President of Lincoln University recently wrote:

> In a world where demographic shifts have already stood the concepts of majority and minority on their heads, it is no longer intellectually defensible to presume to discuss human endeavor and human interaction from the perspective of only one group. The understanding of cultural differences is enhanced when people from a variety of backgrounds can enjoin and inform the debates (Sudarkasa, 1987, p. 100).

Table 1

Minority Participation Rates at Selected CEDA Tournaments

| Tournament | Total #'s | #'s Blacks | % Blacks | #'s Others | % Others | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appalachian | V=14 | 3 | 21.4 | 0 | 0 | 21.4 |
| | N=62 | 3 | 4.8 | 2 | 3.2 | 8.0 |
| John Carroll | V=40 | 2 | 5.0 | 4 | 10.0 | 15.0 |
| Towson State | V=44 | 1 | 2.3 | 4 | 9.1 | 11.4 |
| (Mencken) | N=24 | 1 | 4.2 | 1 | 4.2 | 8.4 |
| G.Mason | V=28 | 5 | 17.9 | 0 | | 17.9 |
| Ohio | V=22 | 2 | 9.1 | 0 | | 9.1 |
| | N=24 | 0 | | 0 | | |
| Capital | V=72 | 1 | 1.4 | 3 | 4.2 | 5.6 |
| Towson State (Chesapeake) | V=93 | 4 | 4.3 | 4 | 4.3 | 8.6 |
| W&M | V=44 | 3 | 6.8 | 5 | 11.4 | 14.7 |
| Richmond | V=43 | 7 | 16.3 | 0 | | 16.3 |
| Marist (NY) | V=30 | 3 | 10.0 | 2 | 6.0 | 16.0 |
| Totals: | 540 | 35 | 6.5 | 25 | 4.6 | 11.1 |
| Varsity Subs: | 430 | 31 | 7.2 | 22 | 5.1 | 12.3 |
| Novice Subs: | 110 | 4 | 3.6 | 3 | 2.7 | 6.3 |

Table 2

Minority Success Rates at Selected CEDA Tournaments

| Tourney | Minority Speakers/ Total Awards | | #/% Quarters | #/% Semis | #/% Finals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| App State | V=2/6 | (33.3%) | -- | 2 -- 25% | 0 -- 0% |
| | N=1/6 | (16.7%) | 1 -- 6.3% | 1 -- 12.5% | 0 -- 0% |
| J. Carroll | 0/6 | (0%) | 2 --12.5% | 2 -- 25% | 1 --25% |
| Towson St | V=0/6 | (0%) | 3 --18.8% | 1 -- 12.5% | 1--25% |
| (Mencken) | N=1/5 | (20%) | -- | 0 -- 0% | 0-- 0% |
| G. Mason | 1/10 | (10%) | 5 -- 31.2% | 2 -- 25% | 2 --50% |
| Ohio | 2/6 | (33.3%) | -- | 2 -- 25% | 2 --50% |
| Capital | 0/10 | (0%) | 1 -- 6.3% | 0 -- 0% | 0 -- 0% |
| Towson St (Chesapeake) | 0/8 | (0%) | 1 -- 6.3% | 0 -- 0% | 0 -- 0% |
| Richmond | 1/5 | (20%) | 2 --12.5% | 2-- 25% | 2 -- 50% |
| Marist (NY) | 3/11 | (27.3%) | 4 -- 25% | 1-- 12.5% | 0 -- 0% |
| Totals: | 11/79 | (13.9%) | 19 -- 14.8% | 11-- 13.5% | 8--16.7% |

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